

limited representation. Reports dating back to the 1960s have found discrimination at the USDA in both program delivery and the treatment of its employees of African-American descent.

Today, USDA continues to be the subject of a number of lawsuits brought by minority farmers and ranchers alleging discrimination. This reputation is so pervasive that the USDA has been called the last plantation on numerous occasions.

When Secretary Tom Vilsack began his tenure as Secretary of Agriculture in 2009, he promised a new era of civil rights at the USDA. I applaud him for his recognition, honesty, candor, and willingness to confront a very hard truth, not fixing the blame but trying to fix the problem to make sure that America's agricultural access, resources, and industry would be open to all.

At that time, there were over 14,000 unresolved discrimination complaints in the Department of Agriculture. The discrimination perpetuated through USDA's farm lending programs, undermining Black farmers' ability to continue their operations during the 20th century, resulting in over 900,000 Black farmers losing their lands from the people who were originally the custodians of this land. African Americans who had been kidnapped, captured, and enslaved and who made cotton king. When they had the opportunity to farm, the USDA had turned their back on these family farmers.

Between 1920 and 1997, African-American farmers had declined by 98 percent because of government policy. Right here, down Pennsylvania Avenue, in 1925, we remember when the Ku Klux Klan was a mainstream organization. We remember that when President Harding died in Indiana, there was a Klan rally at the fairgrounds commemorating his death. That ghost still lingered on.

Contemporary data shows that African Americans still account for only 1.4 percent of the country's 3.4 million producers. Equity issues remain in program delivery to this very day.

An NPR analysis most recently found that, in 2022, only 36 percent of Black farmers received direct loans from USDA while their White counterparts received 72 percent loan acceptance. Perhaps some of the biggest gaps in the loan demographics can also be seen in the rejection numbers, where 16 percent of Black farmers are rejected. The highest corresponding figure for White farmers was 4 percent. Forty-eight percent of Black farmers withdrew their applications in frustration, and that number corresponds with Asian Americans, compared to only 24 percent of those identifying as Caucasian.

□ 1115

While efforts are underway to address this current crisis through the Inflation Reduction Act, and other measures, there must be a process in place to clarify and bolster civil rights protections at the USDA.

The Just USDA Standards and Transparency Act of 2023, 100 years after Rosewood, would correct this.

GOD REST YE MERRY,
GENTLEMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as Christmastime approaches, I rise to share the history of one of the most beloved carols—and there are more to come.

"God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen."

The first line means, gentlemen, may God keep you in good spirits—a blessing.

Immensely popular throughout its history, this carol even merits a mention by Charles Dickens in his famous tale, "A Christmas Carol." It is also a very old carol and was almost certainly sung by wandering groups of singers called waits. In Merrie Olde England, music was an important part of everyday life. Minstrels carried the news of the day from town to town and were often handsomely rewarded for their efforts.

In many towns, the waits played the role of town criers, singing the hours of the day and reporting local happenings. Christmastime kept them especially busy. As they strolled through the snowy streets, they told the story of the nativity in song, adding to the festive atmosphere. Townspeople would show their appreciation by giving the singers money or food.

These are the words of that famous carol:

God rest ye merry, gentlemen; let nothing you dismay.

Remember, Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day.

To save us all from Satan's power, when we were gone astray.

○tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.

○tidings of comfort and joy.

In Bethlehem, in Israel, this blessed babe was born,

And laid within a manger upon this blessed morn;

The which His mother Mary did nothing take in scorn.

○tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.

○tidings of comfort and joy.

From God our Heavenly Father, a blessed angel came;

And unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same;

How that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name.

○tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy.

○tidings of comfort and joy.

I hope that you keep this history in mind of this beautiful song as you celebrate during the holiday season.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of central Texas, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday.

EXPULSION OF REPRESENTATIVE
GEORGE SANTOS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. IVEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. IVEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on this solemn occasion to urge my colleagues to take the rare step of exercising the expulsion clause of the United States Constitution.

Congressman GEORGE SANTOS has failed to uphold the principles of scrupulous, selfless public service. He has violated the law and he has violated this body's ethics rules.

As a member of the Ethics Committee, I can report that the evidence against him is substantial and damning. I can also report that there was no rush to judgment.

During the course of our investigation, the Ethics Committee authorized 37 subpoenas, issued 43 requests for information, obtained and reviewed over 172,000 pages of documents, interviewed over 40 witnesses, and reviewed relevant public information, including the Federal indictments in the criminal case in New York.

Our bipartisan investigation revealed that he laundered \$50,000 of his campaign donors' money through two personal accounts and spent it on himself on designer clothes, a car payment, a credit card, and personal debts.

He cheated the government out of \$24,000 in unemployment benefits during the pandemic when he was earning a salary of \$120,000 from an investment firm.

He lied and said he loaned his unsuccessful campaign for Congress over \$80,000, and repaid himself for the fictitious loan, netting a personal profit of \$27,000.

In the second—this time successful campaign for Congress—he lied again, this time to the tune of \$500,000.

He also transferred and hid from the FEC a sum of \$50,000 from his congressional campaign to his State Political Action Committee. He spent over \$40,000 of campaign funds on personal expenses, like expensive travel and meals, casino stays, an adult website, and cosmetic procedures, personally enriching himself at his donors' expense—all of this on top of his constant lying about his resume and his family history.

There are charges of fraud, identity theft, credit card skimming, and swindling a disabled veteran.

In short, the evidence of criminal and ethical violations is extensive and overwhelming.

Mr. SANTOS has complained that he has not received due process. He also suggested that he was unaware of the fraud and misconduct, apparently trying to shift the blame to his treasurer and others.

Mr. SANTOS worked closely with his treasurer, who pled guilty just last month to her role in this scheme. The text messages they exchanged about the fake loans show that he was a knowing and active participant in the misconduct.

The campaign staffers we interviewed as part of our investigation also made clear that he was certainly aware of the campaign's financial abuses.

In addition, his campaign consultants gave him a 141-page vulnerability report that detailed many of his frauds and lies. They demanded that he drop out of the race. When he refused—just like he is doing today—three of his staffers quit in protest.

The Ethics Committee also offered Mr. SANTOS a chance to meet with us for an interview or deposition to explain his side. He has done countless interviews and gave a press conference just a few feet from here earlier this morning, but somehow he never found time to meet with us. Somehow he never even tried to offer a plausible explanation for his conduct. In fact, all he said today was that he would address our report at a later time.

He said something over the weekend that stuck with me. He said he would wear expulsion as a badge of honor. When all this is over, I am afraid he won't be wearing a badge of honor, he will be wearing an orange jumpsuit.

This is a historic moment. The House has only expelled five Members in our entire history.

The Constitution is clear that we don't have to wait until Mr. SANTOS is remanded to the Bureau of Prisons before we can vote to expel him from the House of Representatives.

The Constitution is also clear in the safeguards it provides to ensure that the power to expel a duly elected Member was not abused. The Framers—in their wisdom—set the high bar of a two-thirds vote.

Unlike some of the rushed motions to censure that we have seen here on this floor just in the past year, Mr. SANTOS received a full and extensive investigation, and a detailed report from the Ethics Committee. The evidence of criminal and ethical misconduct is extensive, overwhelming, and undisputed.

Finally, the Ethics Committee's investigation and report was bipartisan, and its findings were unanimous.

Given all of these safeguards and all of this evidence, now is the time to hold Mr. SANTOS accountable. Now is the time to show the American people that we can hold ourselves to at least a minimal standard of conduct. Now is the time to vote to expel GEORGE SANTOS from the United States House of Representatives.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF MRS. SUE NELL BOENKER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FALLON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FALLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life and service of Mrs. Sue Nell Boenker of Fort Worth, Texas, who passed away October 16, 2021.

Mrs. Boenker was a dedicated mother, grandmother, and a stalwart Christian. She was married to a dear friend of mine, Al Boenker, who is really one of the most magnificent human beings I have ever had the good fortune to encounter.

Mrs. Boenker was born on April 27, 1949, in Hot Springs, Arkansas. On December 5, 1970, she married Al Boenker, and they lived together and had a very happy marriage for over a half century.

Sue Boenker personified the American Dream. In 1998, she started her own Allstate Insurance Agency firm and quickly became one of the largest firms in the State of Texas. She continued to operate it successfully for many years. Without a doubt, she was an inspirational role for many people and many entrepreneurs, in particular, in the north Texas area and beyond.

Mrs. Boenker was also an exemplary member of her community and a leader in the business world. She was a devoted woman of faith, who never hesitated to pray for the health and well-being of others. She was very selfless. Those that knew her knew that she was incredibly gracious and very generous with her wealth, but also—and far more importantly—her time.

Beyond that of a familial nature, she was dedicated to human service. She will forever be remembered in the hearts and minds of those individuals that she cared for and served.

Mr. Speaker, I requested that a U.S. flag be flown over our Nation's Capitol to recognize the wonderful American life that Sue Boenker led. She always put God first. She put her country first. She put her family first. She put her friends first.

Mr. Speaker, I know that she has been sorely missed. Al Boenker lost his soulmate 2 years ago.

Al is a great salesman and is a self-made guy. He has done incredibly well and is very generous. The reason for his success was Sue and the virtues that they shared, which were honesty, integrity, and loyalty.

Do you know what we are all striving for in our lives?

It doesn't matter if it is personal, political, professional, we are searching and striving for authenticity and for people to be genuine. That is one of the reasons why so many people do succeed in business, you have to have these virtues in place. Al Boenker has those. He touches the lives of the folks that he encounters in such a tremendous and magnificent way.

For me, he is not only a dear friend, a mentor, and really an inspiration to recognize and make sure you put family first and to make sure you represent, as a Member of this august Chamber, 767,000 people. You have to serve them. That is what Al Boenker did. That is why he was so successful. Not only did he make great commercials, but he gave great rates and helped people a little bit more when they needed home, auto, or life insurance. He was there and people trusted him.

□ 1130

I just wanted to take this moment, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the loss that Al Boenker suffered when his wife, Sue, left the surly bonds of this Earth.

I think the greatest compliment any one of us can pay to another person is to look them in the eye and say, the world is a better place because you are in it.

The world was certainly a better place when Sue Boenker was in it, and the world is a better place because Al is still with us.

Mr. Speaker, God bless the Boenker family, and God bless Texas.

ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, it is a little over 1 month now, 1½ months, since October 7 and the horrific things that happened to the good and peaceful people of Israel.

Many, many deaths and unspeakable demonic actions were taken by Hamas against innocent Israeli citizens attending a festival or other events in their neighborhoods. I can't begin to speak about how ugly some of these things are. The rape, the murder, and the beheadings are beyond polite company. Maybe we need to be a little less polite in talking about just what kind of horrific activity Hamas has been up to. Even the Gazan people are subject to the terrorism of not being able to make a move or make a change in that area they are trying to live in.

Nonetheless, Israelis have bent over backwards for decades in so-called land-for-peace deals and so-called two-state solutions. Yet when Israel gives 99 percent of what they asked for to the Palestinian Authority, previously to Arafat, and to Hamas, they aren't really there at the table to negotiate. They are not there to acknowledge the State of Israel as a Jewish state or its right to exist. They want it eliminated.

When they talk about "from the river to the sea," there is no room for compromise with them for acknowledging a Jewish state and a Jewish people in the State of Israel.

So why are we pussyfooting around saying, cease-fire, more land for peace, more two-state solution?

They do not want the existence of Israel.

That is the first question we should ask any of them when we sit down: Okay, do you want this solution?

Do you want that solution?

Do you agree that there should be the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state?

They will turn away from the table because there is not a negotiation. There is not an agreement. They do not care to have peace. They care to wipe Israel off the face of the map.

So what does that mean right now in the short term?

Yes, it looks like a seventh day of cease-fire, at least in the Gaza area, but when you squeeze that balloon, Mr. Speaker, then you get other problems like the violence in Jerusalem, on the